

Cowes Enterprise College

Crossfield Avenue, Cowes, PO31 8HB

Inspection dates

28–29 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The quality of teaching is too variable. Too much teaching is inadequate and too few lessons enable students to make good progress.
- As a result, students do not make enough progress as they move through the school. Examination results are not high enough given students' abilities.
- Many lessons do not challenge students. Students are given work that is too easy or repeats things that they already know, understand or can do. Many lessons fail to interest students.
- There are also weaknesses in the curriculum (the way in which the school organises the subjects that students study). For example, some students take GCSE examinations early and do not achieve their full potential.
- The school's leaders have not done enough to improve teaching and overall the school is not improving quickly enough. Leaders have too positive a view of the school's current effectiveness and do not have an accurate enough understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- The sixth form is also inadequate. A-level examination results are too low.

The school has the following strengths

- Students are polite, friendly and cooperative. They generally have positive attitudes and behave well.
- Students' attendance has improved.
- Students attending courses outside school benefit from these opportunities.
- The new governing body recognises and acknowledges the school's weaknesses. The governors are challenging the school's leaders to make the necessary improvements.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 40 lessons, with a number of briefer visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, staff and members of the school's trust and governing body.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including information relating to students' achievement.
- Inspectors considered the 99 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), which were all made at the time of the inspection. They also considered 25 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

Inspection team

Christopher Russell, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jennifer Bray	Additional Inspector
Colin Money	Additional Inspector
Una Stevens	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Cowes Enterprise College was established in September 2011. It opened following the reorganisation of schools on the Isle of Wight and the closure of a 13–18 high school and three middle schools; most staff transferred to the college. A new principal was appointed to lead the college and took up post as Principal designate in September 2010.
- The college is maintained by the local authority, but run by the Cowes Pathfinder Trust.
- It currently occupies the site of the old high school, although it will eventually move to a new, purpose-built site. There has been a great deal of uncertainty over the move. It has already been postponed twice and is now unlikely to take place until spring 2013.
- The college is larger than the average secondary school.
- It has specialist status for business and enterprise.
- Most students are of White British heritage. Few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of students who are supported at school action and at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, are average.
- An average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium. The government provides additional funding to support these students because they are at particular risk of underachieving.
- Some students follow some of their courses with other educational providers. Alternative provision used by Cowes Enterprise College includes: the local college; UKSA, a maritime charity; HTP, a local vocational education provider; Challenge and Adventure, a charity set up to support young people on the island.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement by eradicating any inadequate teaching and increasing the amount of good teaching, in particular by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have high enough expectations of their students
 - take proper account of students' abilities and what students already know, understand and can do when planning lessons
 - set work that is at the right level and challenges everyone
 - ensure that their lessons engage and interest students and move at a good pace
 - check students' understanding as the lesson progresses, adapting their teaching to enable everyone to make progress
 - provide opportunities that enable students to develop their reading, writing and speaking skills to a higher level
 - provide feedback that gives students clear guidance about how to improve their work.
- Improve the school's timetable and curriculum for September 2013 to ensure that it enables students to achieve well, ensuring that:

- students study an appropriate balance of subjects, well timetabled across the week
- fewer Year 7 to Year 11 classes are split between teachers
- early GCSE examination entry does not limit the achievement of more-able students, or lead to poor preparation for A-level study or ineffective use of time in Year 11
- lessons in personal, social, health and religious education are well planned and are of high quality.

■ Improve leadership and management across the school by ensuring that:

- leaders' roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clear
 - the quality of teaching is monitored thoroughly, with rigorous follow up
 - teachers are provided with precise and thorough feedback about their performance and high-quality professional development and support that enable them to improve their teaching
 - teachers are able to judge students' achievement accurately
 - the methods for checking how effective the school is are thorough, precise and accurate, and based on rigorous, well-coordinated monitoring of all aspects of its work
 - leaders make the best use of information about students' current achievement when they evaluate the school's work.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students across the school and in the sixth form make inadequate progress. They join the school in Year 7 with average attainment. Their attainment as they move through the school is too low given their abilities and starting points.
- Too few students achieve five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics.
- Many students take GCSE examinations early. In many cases these students do not have enough time to develop the skills and depth of understanding necessary to achieve the highest grades. As a result, they are then not well prepared for sixth form study. Additionally, poor use is made of the time gained by early entry.
- Examination results in the sixth form are too low. Students in Year 12 and Year 13 who took examinations in 2013 did not make enough progress during the year.
- Disabled students and students with special educational needs also typically make too little progress. They sometimes make better progress than other students when teaching assistants provide them with support that is targeted to their specific needs.
- Students who follow some of their courses with other education providers, for example, to study motor vehicle maintenance, typically gain from the experience. In many cases their motivation and school attendance improve, and this helps them to achieve in other subjects.
- Some of the additional funding given to the school is used to support the development of students' reading, writing and numeracy skills. However, the impact of this is not evident. Only 14% of students known to be eligible for free school meals gained five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics last year; this was much lower than for other students.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is variable in quality and too much is inadequate or requires improvement.
- Students recognise the considerable variability in teaching and the impact that it has on their achievement. Parents do too: over half of those who responded to the online questionnaire do not think that their children are taught well.
- Too many lessons are uninteresting. In many cases teachers talk for too long, with little variety in the lesson activities. They ask simple questions that require only one- or two-word answers. In these lessons students become bored and unmotivated, and so they do not produce their best work.
- Weaknesses in many teachers' planning mean that lessons do not stretch and challenge students appropriately. Many teachers make too little use of information about students' abilities and current achievement when they plan their lessons. In most lessons everyone does the same task: it is not shaped to take account of different students' abilities. In too many lessons:
 - teachers expect too little of their students
 - tasks are too easy for some students and too hard for others
 - students are given too long to complete their work and time is wasted
 - the work covers things that students already know, understand or can do
 - students have to work through too many easy tasks before they get to more demanding work.
- In many cases teachers do not check students' progress during the lesson to see whether some are struggling or finding the work too easy. They do not adapt the lesson to ensure that everyone can make progress.
- Students do not have a clear enough idea of how to improve their work. They usually know what level or grade they should be aiming at, but not how to achieve it. Some marking is useful, but much is infrequent, with vague comments that are of little value to students.

- Too few lessons provide students with opportunities to practise, reinforce and develop their reading, writing and speaking skills. As a result, while students have reasonable skills, they should be better.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**requires improvement**

- Most students behave well in lessons and generally have good attitudes to learning and cooperate well, but some are quiet and passive when the work does not interest or challenge them. There is some poor behaviour. This is generally the result of uninteresting lessons. As one student put it, 'We try it on when we are bored.'
- Students behave well around the school. They are polite, courteous and friendly. Staff are visible around the site and this helps to maintain a calm and orderly atmosphere. Students and staff get on well together.
- Students say that they feel safe and secure in school, although a few younger students pointed to some boisterous behaviour. Students understand how to keep safe and secure, for example, when using the internet. They say that bullying is not a significant problem for them and that, when it does occur, it is dealt with well. Most parents also feel that their children are kept safe and well looked after.
- The work of the attendance officer has led to a fall in student absence. Attendance levels are now broadly average. However, the attendance of disabled students and those with special educational needs is too low.
- The way in which staff support students who face problems or particular challenges is a strength. The school can point to many cases where extensive care and support have helped students to overcome significant difficulties. The pupil premium, which is additional funding provided by the government for those students who are eligible for free school meals or are in local authority care, has been well used in this respect, although it has not been effective in raising their achievement sufficiently.

The leadership and management**are inadequate**

- The school's overall improvement has been too slow. The Principal and other senior leaders have been distracted by the uncertainties of the building programme. They are ambitious for the school's future success and recognise that the school needs to improve, but while there have been improvements, for example to attendance, the school's leaders are too optimistic about its current effectiveness.
- Arrangements for improving teaching are not sufficiently rigorous. Leaders observe lessons and provide teachers with feedback, but advice is often not precise enough or followed up with sufficient rigour to ensure that teaching improves. Systems for managing the performance of teachers have been redeveloped, although teachers have not yet been set targets for this year. Teachers receive training, but its impact is often unclear. Some staff with a background in middle school teaching are not adequately prepared to teach across the 11–18 age range.
- Some leaders' roles are unclear and there is some duplication. In many cases it is not clear enough who is accountable for aspects of the school's work. Some leaders have too many areas to manage effectively. Leaders check and monitor the school's work, but the different elements of their monitoring are not well coordinated and many aspects are not sufficiently rigorous. As a result, leaders do not have a clear enough picture of the school's strengths, weaknesses and overall effectiveness.
- Staff collect a lot of information about how well students are doing, but do not make best use of it when evaluating the school's work. Their analyses do not give a clear enough picture of the most important information, such as the achievement of different groups of students.
- Predictions about students' achievement were inaccurate last year: the school expected better

GCSE and A level results. Leaders are now working to ensure that all teachers are able to assess students' work accurately.

- The curriculum has significant weaknesses. Many students take GCSE examinations early or follow one-year courses, but this often has a negative impact on their achievement. Personal, social, health and religious studies are not well taught. A lot of time is given over to these lessons, but their value is questionable. The college works with several alternative providers of education and training, and this provision enhances the students' experiences.
 - Many students are affected by weaknesses and imbalances in the school's timetable. For example: many subject classes in Year 7 to Year 11 are split between different teachers; some students do not experience any drama during Years 7 to 9; some students have very long, but infrequent, French or Spanish lessons.
 - Many of the parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire during the inspection had negative views. Over half do not think that the school is well led and managed, and a similar proportion would not recommend the school to other parents. The school's own survey of parents points to more positive parental views.
 - Systems and processes that keep students safe meet requirements.
 - The local authority and members of the trust have a realistic understanding of the school's effectiveness. They help to ensure that the governing body is able to hold the school to account and have arranged additional support, for example, to secure improvements in science.
 - **The governance of the school**
 - The new governing body is challenging the school to improve. Its members are ambitious for the school and have high expectations of its performance. They have a clear understanding of the weaknesses in achievement and teaching. They have set the Principal challenging targets which relate to sharp rises in achievement. The governing body also challenges the Principal to ensure that additional funding is spent appropriately and that teachers are only financially rewarded when their performance merits it.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136009
Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	400263

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1142
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Wells
Principal	Jonathan Russell
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01983 203103
Fax number	01983 203133
Email address	info@cowesenterprisecollege.org.uk

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